

Indian Fin Whale (*B. indica*) is given as 80-90 feet. For further records, vide *Journal, B.N.H.S.*, Vol. XXIII, pp. 576-7.—EDS.]

11.—NOTES ON SOME BURMESE MAMMALS

(*With a photo*)

The following jottings regarding some of the mammals of Burma may be of interest. Much in the notes concerns living specimens in the Rangoon Zoological Gardens.

Pocock (Fauna of Brit. India, Mammalia, Vol. II, pages 162 and 3), mentions that the litter of the Red Dog (*Cuon*) may be as many as seven; Col. Burton, (*J.B.N.H.S.*, Vol. XLI, p. 697) gives up to seven or ten, and cites nine embryos taken from a dead female. There is at present in the Rangoon Zoo a pair of these dogs (*Cuon alpinus* ssp.) which breed regularly once a year. The young are born in about December or January. The litter born in January 1946 numbered nine, and this year there were seven whelps. I am told that none of these puppies are ever reared, the bitch either killing or neglecting them. I am not sure whether the bitch comes on heat about the middle of the year or not, though I have an idea she does, but if so it seems that she does not breed then. I don't know if the litters are always as large as the above, as I have not been in Rangoon when she has had any others.

I persuaded the then Superintendent to let me have the last remaining pup of the 1946 litter on the grounds that it would die any way if left with the bitch. This was a female and the eyes were open. She was about a fortnight old. The eyes were blue and the colour, as usual dark. She reminded me much of a fox cub (*Vulpes vulpes*) of similar age, but her smell was not really like either dog or fox. The nearest description I can think of was she smelt like an English domestic ferret. She would not take milk from a glass dropper, but would lick it from my hand, and soon learned to lap. After only a few days she was fed on beef, and ate a surprising amount for such a tiny creature, and seemed to be thriving on it. I could unfortunately keep her only a fortnight and then I returned her to the Zoo. She died soon afterwards, death being attributed to a change from beef to horse-flesh. She was unfortunately completely blind. When she died, at the age of about two months her ears were fully erect and the coat losing the dark colour, and assuming the characteristic red tinge. I should like to have been able to keep her and bring her up to maturity.

Her voice was similar to a domestic puppy's of like age, but the only noise I have ever heard the parents make is a kind of cackling chatter, though I once heard the Indian Wolf in the Gardens (*Canis lupus pallipes*) give a bark not unlike that of a domestic dog.

A young female Leopard Cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*) which I acquired at Hopin in North Burma had been kept on a long string, dirty and fed only on milk, though past the milk stage. Being therefore very hungry, it was only a matter of hours before she overcame her timidity and would take meat from my fingers. After taking the rope off her neck, and transferring her to a small traveling cage I always fed her by hand. Once I had given her water to

drink she would never again look at milk—naturally enough. She would eat anything in the way of meat including cooked dehydrated meat granules and corned beef. She used to lick my fingers, sometimes gently taking a finger between her teeth, and occasionally pat my hand in play.

With strangers she was as wild as she had ever been, but as far as I was concerned the only thing taboo was picking her up, which I could accomplish only when I could get her by the scruff of the neck.

Considering how badly this cat had been treated before I got her, I think she showed remarkable tolerance towards me. After a short time in Rangoon Zoo she died of anthrax (diagnosed by the Veterinary Research Institute, Insein).

The species is common in Burma and the proper Burmese name is 'Thit Gyak'.

Regarding the other representative of the genus found in Burma, the Fishing Cat (*P. viverrinus*), Pocock (Vol. I, Mammalia, p. 284), though inferring from the extensive range of the species that it occurs in Burma, states that there seems no record of it from that country. This of course is incorrect and several specimens have been recorded from Burma. There is at present in the Rangoon Zoo an adult male from Insein district, Southern Burma. The Burmese call it 'Kyaung Ba', which Pocock gives for the Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus*), and the name is probably applicable to both.

On external characters it would seem that this cat (*P. viverrinus*) is correctly referred to the same genus as the Leopard Cat. I don't know if living specimens have been compared together before, but from certain angles I have noticed that the head appears very similarly shaped in both, and there is also a characteristic 'facial expression', differing from the look on the face of a typical *Felis*.

In fact, apart from colour and length of tail, the living Fishing Cat, appears just a larger model of the live Leopard Cat.

From my own short experience in Burma I would not describe the Jungle Cat (*Felis chaus* ssp.) as common in Burma. I have never seen one in that country, though have come across a number of specimens of the Leopard Cat.

The Golden Cat (*Profelis*), the Marbled Cat (*Pardofelis*) and the Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis*) are all very rare and seldom recorded, though the name for the Golden Cat 'Kya min' or 'king of the cats'¹ seems to be fairly well known.

A name I heard given to my attempted description of a Clouded Leopard was 'Thit tet kya' meaning a 'tree top tiger, or leopard,' but the name, as well as the animal is not at all widely known.

The common term of description in Burma of all the small cats, as well as civets, palm civets, ferret badgers and possibly other small carnivora is simply 'Kyaung' (cat) or 'Taw Kyaung' (jungle cat) though for many of them there are proper names in Burmese.

¹ This name has significance in the belief prevalent, e.g. among the jungle Karens of Tenasserim, that tigers live in such terror of this cat that even a single hair of its body carried on the person will keep a tiger away from the carrier.—EDS.

On p. 417 of Mammalia, Vol. II, Pocock ridicules the idea of the Ferret-Badger (*Helictis personata*) being able to defend itself against Burmese pariah dogs. In my opinion, knowing the type of pariah, or 'pye dog' indicated, this ridicule is quite without justification.

The 'pye dogs' of Burma, as in many other areas, except those trained and kept for hunting (as in some places they are), would, I am certain, not dream of going anywhere near a ferret-badger or any other of the small carnivora. These dogs are almost purely scavengers and from what I have seen of them would much prefer eating filth off a pile than tackle even the rats on the same heap, let alone going after anything like *Helictis*.

A tame mongoose of mine (*H. javanicus*), if anything smaller than the two specimens of *H. personata* now in Rangoon Zoo, once showed that he hadn't much to worry about where pye dogs were concerned. A pair of these pariahs approached him one day, and walked up to him, with heads outstretched and legs stiff. Rikki (the mongoose) turned and took a pace towards them, prompted by the curiosity so typical of a mongoose, and at this gesture both dogs about turned and trotted off smartly. The mongoose pursued them for a short distance, and having so to speak 'seen them off the premises' resumed his investigation of the grass bordering the road. (In pursuing the dogs, I firmly believe the only desire on the part of my mongoose was to satisfy curiosity.)

The point is that either of the dogs, had they the desire and courage to do so, could easily have killed the mongoose. I consider therefore that Tickell's ferret badger anecdote should not be discredited, and that no ferret badger would be in any way endangered by pariah dogs (apart from any question of 'warning colouration' or special means of defence). With a properly trained hunting dog, such as a terrier, it might be a different matter, though even then the ferret badger would probably give a good account of itself, as all the family is noted for courage and tenacity of life.

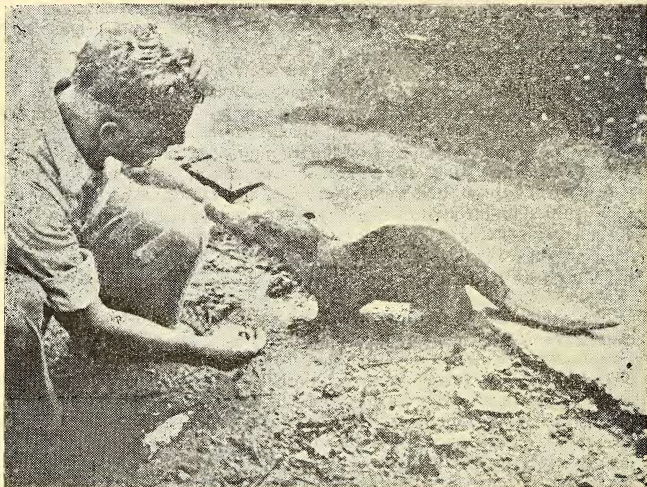
Lutrogale perspicillata, the Smooth Indian otter, is said by Pocock (F.B.I. Mammalia II, p. 292) to have been described by Hodgson as having the tail more flattened than is the case in *Lutra* and *Amblonyx*.

During the past year or so there have been a number of specimens of this otter in the Rangoon Zoo, and I have noticed the following points about them. First, it seems that 'smooth coated' and 'sleek' are not particularly applicable to living specimens, though by the side of one of the other forms they might well appear somewhat smoother by comparison, I don't know. But the tail, or rudder, was quite definitely flattened for most of its length in the five or more live specimens I have seen, both male and female, juvenile and adult.

I am certain this otter could be easily identified from other Oriental forms by the rudder alone, and I consider the most suitable trivial name that could be suggested for the species is 'Flat-tailed Otter' (the flattened tail can be clearly seen in the attached photograph). Others of the species I saw in the Calcutta Gardens had the tail flattened in like manner. A striking feature of the 'flat-tailed' otters in Rangoon was the way in which they so quickly became

accustomed to humans. Even a fully adult female, timid enough at first soon learned that fish was often the result of answering the human voice, and was soon in vigorous competition with her companion in diving for the fish thrown to them.

With the young I have spent hours playing, rolling them over both on land and in the water and was never bitten, though often my hands were between their teeth.



The Smooth Indian or Flat-tailed Otter.

Regarding the habits of these otters, I do not know how nocturnal they are in the wild (they lose of course most of any such habits in captivity), but an otter presumably *L. perspicillata*, was observed by the boatman of a canoe I was in, on the Shweli river in North Burma, one morning long after sunrise.

It has often been stated that otters always come to the bank to eat a fish. While they undoubtedly often do this, and no doubt have to in the case of a very large fish, the ones in Rangoon often eat a fish in the water, either treading water and holding it in their fore paws, or, when it is half eaten, swimming and tilting their heads back so as to keep the fish above the water. From the way in which they do, this I would say it does not seem altogether an acquired captivity habit, and probably they do it in the wild too on occasion. Otters always make a good exhibit in a Zoo, where they get wonderfully tame and show quite an amount of intelligence.

To finish this note I will relate a kind of legend I have heard in Burma concerning the bat.

The story goes that the animals (= mammals) and the birds were engaged in a war. When the animals were winning, the bat

claimed to be one of them, while if the birds seemed to be in the ascendant it associated itself with the avian fraternity. Hence, according to my informant, to call a person a Bat in Burmese is to designate him a turncoat, who tries to throw in his lot with the winning side.

BOMBAY,
7th August 1947.

W. F. H. ANSELL

12.—DISPLAY OF A MALE MINIVET.

In May 1946, while in the Naga Hills, I had a very brief view of a display by a male minivet. I was not able to determine the species, so it may have been either the Common or the Short-billed.

My attention was first drawn to a small red dot above the trees of a valley below me: and it proved to be a male minivet soaring up with out-spread wings. After attaining the top of its flight, it spiralled down, wings still outstretched, and perched on top of a tall tree. Very soon it took off again, and soared up once more in the same manner—the bright scarlet shown off to perfection in the sunlight.

There was a female in a tree nearby, which suggests a sexual as against a threat display.

Although my observation was a momentary one, I put it on record as nothing is known of the displays of the minivets.

SHILLONG,
9th September, 1947.

C. R. STONOR

[In volume XXXIV of the *Journal* (p. 1061), Mr. C. McCann has described the courtship antics of a pair of Scarlet Minivets, also from the Naga Hills. The female suddenly flew up high into the air from its perch on a branch. The male gave chase, caught her up and seized the tip of her tail in his bill. Both birds came spiralling down, separated when a few feet from the ground and returned to the tree. The manoeuvre was soon repeated. Mr. Stonor's observation records only the male in solo display. It would be interesting to learn the true significance of the two forms of behaviour.—EDS.]

13.—OCCURRENCE OF THE LAGGAR FALCON (*FALCO JUGGER* GRAY) AT MT. ABU

In April a pair of Laggar Falcons visited our garden in Abu and were twice seen in Jamun trees. A few days later I saw them again down below the Nakki Lake and the following day out near Bendermere. This is the only pair of Laggar Falcons I have ever seen in Abu which I have visited off and on since 1928. Last week I was out for a walk among the rocky hills two or three miles south, west of St. Mary's School where there is an isolated pinnacle of rock some 300 ft. in height which I have named 'Cleopatra's Bodkin' (you may recognise the rock from this description) and was looking for a means of ascent when my attention was drawn by the activities